



Suspending above expectations

By Ayret Contreras

Ayret Contreras is a senior at Saluda High School. This feature is excerpted from an article she wrote as a participant in the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities journalism contest.

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She is being medevacked. There are bright lights everywhere. She is in and out of consciousness and the buzz of the helicopter is only a distant noise in the back of her mind. The pain is unbearable. She can feel her departure from gravity.

As she rises from the ground she leaves behind the streets, the cars, the buildings. She is suspended far above the rest of the world. She twists and turns, and it was just her reoccurring dream.

Despite the bad dream, Sherri wakes up every morning and goes to her job, just like anyone else. Just like anyone else, Sherri is a mother and a wife that has children to raise and a family to take care of. No differently than anyone else, Sherri is a hardworking American citizen that is capable and willing to do her job.

Sherri Yandle was hired to the mixed department at Fuji Film in Greenwood, South Carolina. Fuji Film processes film for chains such as CVS, Walmart, and Rite Aid. She works from 9:00am to 5:30pm every Monday through Friday. Her job is to locate pictures that have been misplaced or lost by one of the chain's computer systems. She then notifies the customer that she has been able to locate the misplaced pictures.

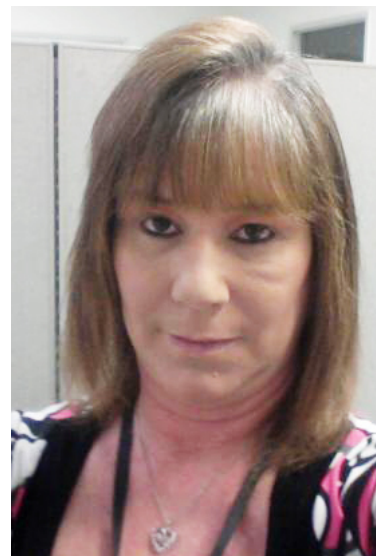
Sherri says that "the joy and relief in their voices when I call and get to say I've found the wedding or the birthday party pictures that were thought to be gone, is what makes me truly enjoy my job. I couldn't be any more thankful for this opportunity."

Sherri has a prosthetic leg. She says, "Even though it should not be this way, I have to prove myself. I have to show them that I can do my job and succeed just as well as, if not better than, the rest." She believes this allows her to go above and beyond her full potential.

Not like everyone, Sherri is a fighter, because just like anyone else, Sherri is human. She did not ask for a disability. She was given it and is simply doing her best to live with it. The events of her accident are something that can never be changed.

In May of 2005, Sherri and her husband were headed back home from Orangeburg to Columbia with a group of friends, all on motorcycles. Instead of making it home, Sherri and her husband ended up in the MCG medical center. The accident was so severe that they had to be medevacked.

A careless driver pinned Sherri's leg between the bumper of the car and the spinning wheel of her motorcycle. Sherri received a clean break in her neck and lost 3/4 of her right leg that night. She was given a very minuscule chance of survival due to the four pints of blood she lost through a damaged carotid artery and the extreme possibility of infection in her leg.



Sherri Yandle, an SCVRD client who is currently employed at Fuji Film in Greenwood.

This is something not just anyone could have handled. Even with her misfortune, Sherri was able to triumph over adversities with the help she received from the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD).

"My journey through SCVRD has given me full knowledge that I can do anything that is put in front of me."

Sherri joined her local SCVRD office in Greenwood after about one and a half years of unsuccessful job searches. "SCVRD built my stamina and gave me hope of being able to find a job."

With the support and encouragement the department provided her, Sherri was able to return and obtain her GED. SCVRD gave her necessary skills to prosper, including what she needed both mentally and physically. Sherri says "I would have been lost without SCVRD and my counselor."

Sherri never lost her determination or independence, stating, "I never let it get me down because I knew I had a home to take care of. I knew I had to continue with my life."

After going through SCVRD, Sherri was the most strong-minded and strong-willed person she had ever been. She was more than ready to not only continue her life, but also her career. Motivation, determination, and diversity are things individuals with disabilities offer. They are a great investment in today's workforce.

Sherri's employers have taken on a great investment. At Fuji Film, it is what Sherri Yandle can do that truly matters. No one focuses on her disability. Just as she rose from the ground the day of her accident, she now rises above the stereotypical ideas people have of people with disabilities. Thanks to her accomplishments she is leaving behind everything people said she could not do. She has suspended far above people's expectations of her.

In the end, she proves just how "equal to the task" individuals with disabilities can be. They get the job done, just like anyone else.

Several Greenwood VR team members worked with Sherri Yandle, including Sandra Evans, Pam Smith, Arthur Kemp, Everett Land, Janice Wilson and Todd McCutcheon.

Around the state

College fair a success at Lexington



The Lexington Area Office held its first annual college fair for transition students on February 24. College representatives from Midlands Technical College, Carolina LIFE Program, College of Charleston, Central Carolina, and Spartanburg Methodist.



Lexington Area Office Transition Team (l to r), Felicia McGhee; Ashley Eaddy; Mila Burgess; Laura Spears, Transition Services Coordinator; and Shainna Williams

Sumter clients learn to “Dress for Success”



Sumter VR staff “walked the runway” during a “Dress for Success” fashion show, held on March 5. JRT clients determined “appropriate” from “inappropriate” attire when seeking employment, voting on the models who they felt should be hired or not hired. Staff also discussed what employers were looking for in job seekers. “Feedback from the clients was great,” says Angela Sumpter, Counselor.

Pictured, left to right: Sharon Beauford; Tom Stabler; Juanita Wragg; Angela Harvey; Carol Lawson; Margaret Mack; Nicole Barr; Glenn Hesselbart; Lee Brunson; and Karen Coleman.

Orientation at Palmetto Center



VR staff orientations are held each first Wednesday at Palmetto Center in Florence to bring new employees from SCVRD offices up to speed on the valuable addictions treatment services provided by the facility to the agency's clients with addictions-related disabilities.

Pictured, left to right: Cheryl Webster, Charleston ATS; Alan Altman, Palmetto Center Addictions Counselor; Pia Scott, Charleston Counselor; Candice Brown, Rock Hill Counselor; Lacey Mack, Rock Hill Counselor; Brittany Woody, Rock Hill Job Coach; Chris Faulk, Charleston ACE; Marsha Tunstall, Palmetto Center Addictions Counselor; and Kerri Bourne, Palmetto Center Charge Nurse.

VR helps Jenkins find her stride with Chamber of Commerce

Shevonna Jenkins has a great new opportunity with the Newberry Chamber of Commerce thanks to assistance from SCVRD's Newberry office.

Shevonna began in the High School High Tech program and was assisted by VR in her quest for a Mass Communications degree from Lander University.

Because the Newberry Chamber utilizes all forms of media to get the word out about local business and membership drives to join the Chamber, SCVRD Area Supervisor Chad Ulmer and Business Development Specialist Stacie Smith arranged an internship for Shevonna. Chamber staff is encouraged to utilize radio, television, e-mail, public appearances, mailings, and billboard advertising to present the Chamber's message. Shevonna is now getting hands on experience in all of these methods.

Read more about Shevonna Jenkins in the [Newberry Observer](#).

Job seekers converge on Tri-County Tech



Photo (left to right): Tiffany Gibson, Oconee-Pickens Job Coach; Layneigh Scott, Anderson Vocational ACE; and Victor Walker from RL Enterprises, a professional recruiting agency.

SC Works (WorkLink) job fair was held on March 20 at the Pendleton campus of Tri-County Technical College.

More than 450 job seekers met with representatives of 68 employers and service providers.



Photo: Anne McAuley, Counselor, talks with a job seeker about Vocational Rehabilitation and how our services can assist.

Annual job fair a success in Oconee-Pickens

The Oconee-Pickens office hosted its annual spring job fair on March 12. Six clients were hired as a result of the event and a number of transition students received summer internship opportunities. In all, 41 clients attended the job fair.

Participating companies included US Engine Valve, GCA Services, Oconee Medical Center, Shaw Industries, Seneca Health and Rehabilitation and Lowe's.

Did you know...



...that in SCVRD's early years, the occupation with the highest number of successful employment outcomes was farming?

Events

The Bryant Center

The Bryant Center is accepting referrals for its two-week **Summer Program for Transition Students**. Students attending one of the scheduled sessions will participate in physical therapy or exercise; take part in simulated work experiences and learn independent living skills through occupational therapy; enhance leadership, teamwork and communication skills; explore careers and post-secondary interests; and engage in mock interviews and other job preparedness activities.

- June 2-13 - Session 1: **Summer Transition Program**.
- July 7-18 - Session 2: **Summer Transition Program**.
- July 28-August 8 - Session 3: **Summer Transition Program**.
All sessions meet 9 am-12 pm Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
To refer a student, please fax a SCVR 219, SCVR 318, SCVR 318a (signed by the student and parent) and a Comprehensive Center referral form to Jennie Thomas at 864-949-6775.
For more information, call 864-249-8030 or 888-322-9391

Enabling eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment

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